

WILPOIT-ROSTONE HOUSE
Beverly Shores Century of Progress
Architectural District (*located from Chicago, Ill.*)
270 Lake Front Drive
Beverly Shores
Porter County
Indiana

HABS NO. IN-240

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

WIEBOLDT-ROSTONE HOUSE

HABS No. IN-240

Location: 270 West Lake Front Drive, north side, Beverly Shores, Indiana.

Lots 3 & 4 in Robert Bartlett's subdivision Unit I.

Present Owner: U.S. Government.

Present Occupant: Currently vacant.

Significance: The Rostone House is one of five houses from the Home and Industrial Arts Group moved at the end of the fair by Robert Bartlett to his lakeside subdivision at Beverly Shores, Indiana. Rostone, a synthetic stone composed primarily of shale and limestone waste, was an experimental building material showcased at a Century of Progress Exposition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1933

2. Architect: Walter Scholer of Lafayette, Indiana

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: The Rostone house was built by Rostone, Inc. and the Indiana Bridge Company for the Century of Progress Exposition. At the end of the 1933 season, Rostone, Inc. and the Indiana Bridge Co. wished to have the Rostone House demolished rather than to exhibit it when the fair reopened in 1934.¹ By the end of 1933, however, R.H. Simpson Co. had replaced the Indiana Bridge Co. as co-sponsors of the project and the house continued as part of the Home and Industrial Arts group.² In 1938 Robert Bartlett owned the house but had rented it for the

¹ J. Franklin Bell to Richard L. Harrison, 26 October 1933, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.

² Richard L. Harrison to J. Franklin Bell, 2 February 1934, Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.

season to Dr. and Mrs. J.P. McKellip.³ Robert Bartlett is listed as the owner of the property in the 1927-1947 Porter County Transfer Book. Nevertheless, the Deed Index indicates that the property was sold on May 20, 1946 to Clifton M. and Frayn Garrick Utley by Saul Plast. The Transfer Books have no record of a transaction between Bartlett and Plast, but presumably, Plast purchased the property from Bartlett sometime prior to 1946. Mr. and Mrs. Utley owned the property for fifteen years, selling it to John C. Read by conditional sales contract on July 8, 1961. On July 17, 1970, Read sold the house to the National Park Service retaining a seven-year Reservation of Use. By 1975 the house was being used as an office for the science division.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Cornell Wood Products Co., wallboard.
Cornell IN-CEL-WOOD, insulation.
US Gypsum Panelwood Wall Board
Wood Mosaic Block Flooring
Tile-Tex Resilient Floor Tile
Holland Heating and Air Conditioning
Crane Bathroom Fixtures and Fittings
Fiat Metal Shower Compartment
Vitrolite Bathroom Walls
Wm. Bayley Co. Steel Windows
Vitaglass Health Glass
Overhead Garage Doors
American Asphalt Paints
Johnson Floor Wax
Robertson Steel Roof Decking
Duncan Meter and Circuit Breaker
Arco Company Mastic

5. Original plans and construction: The house was originally built on a concrete slab foundation. A side entrance gate to the right of the front elevation and a straight-run stair from the roof deck led to a semi-enclosed side yard. The exterior of the house was entirely sheathed in rostone.

6. Alterations and additions: When the house was moved to Beverly Shores, it was set on a concrete-block basement foundation. A closet next to the entrance hall was opened up and a staircase leading to the basement was added. The entrance gate and roof-deck stair were removed. On July 3, 1950, Paul's Insulation Company from La Porte, IN covered the rostone sheathing with Permastone, a product manufactured in

³ "Chicagoans Buy Beverly Home; to Open Tea-Room," Michigan City (Indiana) News-Dispatch, 1 September 1938, 8.

Columbus, Ohio, on all exterior surfaces except the parapet walls which were covered in permasyte for a cost of \$6900.⁴ The only remaining rostone on the exterior of the house surrounds the front entranceway.

B. Historical Context:

In the winter and spring of 1934, sixteen buildings were brought by barge and by truck from the site of the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition to Robert Bartlett's subdivision at Beverly Shores, Indiana. In an attempt to capitalize on the fair's success, Bartlett reestablished a small exhibition of model houses along Lake Front Drive in Beverly Shores. Understanding the importance of the fair to Chicago and to Depression-era America is crucial for comprehending the significance of the houses for Bartlett and for those who purchased land at Beverly Shores. (See HABS No. IN-239)

I. The Rostone House

Rostone Inc. and Indiana Bridge Co. rented Lot 7 in the Home and Industrial Arts group from the 1933 Century of Progress season for \$2100.⁵ Thomas E. Smith and B.R. Graham contracted with Century of Progress for the interior decoration of the house on March 1, 1933. By April 18, 1933 Smith and Graham had yet to submit definite plans, contracts and information for the interior decoration, and Richard Harrison, the head of the project at Rostone was getting nervous. After much aggravated correspondence between Harrison, Smith-Graham and the Century of Progress staff, Smith-Graham's contract was cancelled on July 17, 1933, and Tobey Furniture Co. took over as interior decorators on June 24, 1933.⁶ The original sign read Rostone-Indiana Bridge Co. and made no mention of the interior decoration. Correspondence between Harrison and Smith-Graham indicated that the upstairs room, shown as a solarium in 1933 and a bed-room in 1934 was originally designed as a bedroom. Perhaps because of time constraints caused by the decorating controversy, the room was exhibited as a solarium

⁴ Fidelity Appraisal Group, 1952. "Rostone House," Reservation of Use Files. Park Headquarters. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Porter, IN.

⁵ Application 1 March 1933. Box 405, I-12940, I-12941. "Century of Progress," Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.

⁶ Series of letters from Richard L. Harrison to Smith-Graham and members of the fair committee. Box 405, I-12940, I 12941, "Century of Progress," Special Collections, University of Illinois, Chicago.

in 1933.⁷

a. Rostone as a building material.

Rostone was introduced as a building material at the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition. It is a synthetic product composed of shale, alkaline earths, and limestone quarry waste. It was produced in a variety of colors and in slabs, panels and other forms to exact dimensions. Its creators advertised that the new synthetic stone had properties resembling limestone. The advantages to rostone over a natural stone were that it could be produced in any dimension and that could be manufactured in several colors. The material, however, turned out to be much less durable than initial tests indicated. The sheathing on the Rostone House began to fail approximately ten years after it was installed; the house was reclad with Permasone in 1950.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character:

The rectangular massing of the Rostone house is composed of two vertical segments, one in front of the other, with lower horizontal blocks on either side forming two side wings. The house appears classically symmetrical at first glance although the horizontal wing on the left of the front facade is longer than the right wing. This slight assymetry is accented by the windows which are smaller and covered with grating on the left wing and larger and unprotected on the right.

2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: approx. 72'x 33'

2. Foundations: The foundations are reinforced concrete footings with concrete block foundation walls. Originally, the house was exhibited at the Century of Progress on a concrete slab and had no basement.

3. Walls: Walls are of Permastone over original cream-buff rostone; the garage with its exposed wood walls and the

⁷ Richard L. Harrison to Smith-Graham. Box 405, I-12940, I-12941, "Century of Progress," Special Collections, Richard J. Daley Library, University of Illinois, Chicago.

basement with its concrete block walls are the only exceptions. Originally, four-inch rock wool, insulation board and mastic filled the areas between the interior and exterior walls.

4. Structural system, framing: The steel frame is on a spacing of 4'0" that corresponds to the dimensions of the original Rostone slabs. These slabs (4'x 18"x 2") were bolted to steel studs through a cushioning layer of insulation board. The bolts were cast into the Rostone slabs that were held in place with special clips sealed with mastic.⁸

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: A small balcony with a wrought-iron railing projects from the window above the main entrance. To the west side of the house, a concrete patio with wood and iron railings begins in front of the garage, extends in front of the side entrance and ends with a staircase leading down to the beach. Roof terraces off of the solarium/master bedroom are bordered by parapets. Originally, these decks were covered in rose and buff rostone slabs.⁹

6. Chimneys: A Permastone-covered chimney projects from the east side of the central rectangular block.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The house has four doors to the exterior as well as two doors that give access to the roof decks. The main entrance is on the south side of the building; the ornament around the door is the only original rostone still visible on the exterior. The ornament is Deco-inspired with red-orange, pink and grey stone arranged in a stepped pattern carved with chevrons and diamonds. The wide, hinged wood door has six door lights arranged into three pairs consisting of a small square pane of glass positioned over a longer rectangular pane. The west side entrance is covered in a pink aluminum awning and leads to the patio. A third entrance connects the south bedroom to the exterior. The fourth entrance to the house is through the north side of the basement. The garage has a manual overhead door.

⁸ Bemis, Albert Farwell. The Evolving House 3 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1936), 509.

⁹ Dorothy Raley, ed. A Century of Progress: Homes and Furnishings (Chicago: M.A. Ring Company, 1934), 120.

b. Windows and shutters: The house contains several different types of windows. Awning and louver styles are the most common on the north facade of the house although mullioned stationary windows, casements and double hung windows are also found throughout the house. A large oriel window divided into four bays dominates the north facade. The most unusual windows are hexagonal and are located on the front facade of the house. One of the hexagonal windows is found in the garage and has six lights with frosted glass. The second hexagonal window located in the laundry room and a fixed-pane window in the garage are sheilded by helix-shaped stone grating.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Originally, the house had a flat roof with two-ply, half-inch insulating board, asphalt, mastic, fabric and Rostone roof slabs. The current roof is flat and covered in modern roofing material.

b. Cornice, eaves: Originally, the house had red-brown Rostone copings on its parapets.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: none.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Although the house is two stories, most of the living space is on the first floor. A front entrance hall opens directly onto a dining/living area that leads into the kitchen. Two corridors branch off of the entrance hall. To the left, a corridor leads to a laundry room, a bathroom, and an attached garage. To the right, two bedrooms are linked by a bathroom. The second floor contains only one room that was originally designed as a solarium but has been used as a bedroom. There is access from the second floor to two roof decks. The house also has a multi-room basement that was added when the house was moved to Beverly Shores.

2. Stairways: The house has one main doglegged stairway leading from the entrance hall to the second story solarium/master bedroom. It consists of 14 stairs leading to a landing and a white rostone-covered parapet with red rostone coping; the landing is followed by four stairs to the upstairs balcony. The handrail is made of aluminum. Risers are covered in white rostone; treads are covered in red rostone.

3. Flooring: The basement floor is concrete, the first floor is reinforced concrete slab, and the second floor is concrete

on a steel deck with junior I-beams and wood furring strips.¹⁰

The entrance hall is the only area containing large quantities of the original rostone flooring. Here the rostone is arranged in a red rectangular pattern with a grey border. The floor in the kitchen is linoleum. The living/dining areas have brown low-pile carpet which has been pulled back in areas to reveal wood parquet flooring. The upstairs solarium/bedroom and the downstairs bathroom have brown carpeting as well. Flooring in the south bedroom at the east end of the first floor is wood parquet while the north bedroom has brown carpeting laid over green linoleum tiles blocks and red tiles. Linoleum squares cover the floor in the laundry room while square wood panels line the hallway floor.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Original ceilings were of Cornell wallboard made of high-grade wall fibre, wood furring, and steel girders. In most areas of the house (dining/living area, upstairs solarium/master bedroom, north bedroom and hall) dropped ceilings have been installed. Above these ceilings are wood joists spaces approximately 16" apart with cross beams approximately every forty inches. Styrophone insulation lines the ceiling directly below the steel structure. Other areas of the house (kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, and south bedroom) have wallboard ceilings. The ceiling in the solarium consists of three stepped plywood panels on either side arranged to form a zigurat pattern.

Walls in the kitchen, two bedrooms, and the sunroom are plaster over plasterboard. The dining/living area are original paneling. Walls in the small bathroom, the laundry room and the hallway to the garage are Masonite. The garage itself has walls of Masonite, Rostone panels, and either Homosote or Celotex. The entry hall, stairwell, and balcony walls are covered in Rostone. The large bathroom between the two bedrooms is covered in a synthetic material that comes in a board-like form. The basement walls are painted concrete block and gypsum board.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Two hinged doors with one large light each separate the living area and the entrance hall. Fixed-pane winglights run the full height of the doors on either side. A swinging door separates the kitchen and the dining area and a hinged door leads from the kitchen to the garage. None of this hardware appears to be original.

¹⁰ Bemis, 509.

Doors with original hardware on either side of the bathroom adjoin the bedrooms in the eastern wing of the house. Each bedroom has a door to the corridor. The door to the bathroom off of the laundry room also has original hardware. Upstairs a wide rectangular opening without a door leads to the solarium.

Three doors with original hardware have been removed. Two stored in the dining area were probably originally hung on either side of the entrance hall; a third door that probably originally hung in the entrance to the laundry room from the corridor is stored in the laundry room.

b. Windows: Most of the large windows are on the north side of the house. The window type essentially defines the shift from dining to living area in the great rectangular room; the dining area has four windows dressed with window quilts (one louver and three fixed pane windows with eight lights each) while the living area has an aluminum oriel window with three bays and four main window divisions. The central bay has two large windows each consisting of a single-light, fixed pane framed at the top by a fixed pane with two lights and at the bottom by two operable awning windows. On either side of the central bay, vertical bays consist of five stacked windows (four operable awnings capped by one fixed pane). The original window in this area was made of steel.

The kitchen has two louver windows. The north bedroom has two casement windows with four lights each on either side of a large mirror and an operable aluminum sash window on the east side. The south bedroom has one tripartite window with a central fixed pane and casement windows on either side. All three areas have one light each. The bathroom joining the two bedrooms has one double casement window with three lights each. In the laundry room, a single light casement opens inward and is protected by a geometric grille. The adjacent bathroom has one casement window that also swings inward and has a geometric grille.

On the stair landing, one casement window with six lights opens onto a small balcony with an iron grate. Upstairs, the solarium has eleven windows: one louver, eight fixed-pane with six lights each, and two casement/awning combinations with an eight light casement window topped by an awning with two lights. Eight of the the eleven windows have quilts.

6. Decorative features and trim: The house was originally built to display the use of rostone as a decorative feature as well as a structural material. This function is most obvious in the entrance hall and around the fireplace in the living room. The soft grey rostone painted white on the mantel surrounding the fireplace consists of three panels approximately 40 inches by 16 inches surrounded on either side by six-inch square rostone panels. An Art Deco chevron pattern is carved directly above the manteltree. The outer hearth consists of fourteen red rostone tiles with a six-inch moulded baseboard.

In the hallway the walls are covered in long, grey rectangular rostone panels painted white similar to those around the fireplace. The floor is also covered in decorative rostone arranged to form a geometric pattern. In the living area, the painted white wood paneling has been arranged to form a rhythm of wide (approx. three feet) flat panels alternating with four 3" vertical boards. Two hollow plywood pilasters frame either side of the entrance from living area to entrance hall.

7. Hardware: Most doors on the interior as well as the front entrance door have original hardware. The doorknobs are crystal while the door plates are trapezoidal with Deco-inspired decorative stepping.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The house contains two fireplaces, one in the living area and a second in the solarium/master bedroom. The laundry room, hall, solarium/master bedroom, and stair landing have floor vents; the eastern bathroom, hall, and living/dining area have wall vents and the corridor, and upstairs balcony have ceiling vents. A ventilation/lighting hood in the kitchen is mounted above an empty area that most likely held a range. There is a Honeywell thermostat in the living area. Original heating and cooling was by Holland Heating and Air Conditioning.

b. Lighting: Sconces in the dining area, both bathrooms and stairwell, overhead flourescent tubes in the bedrooms, dining/living area and solarium/master bedroom, and single bulb hanging lights in the hall, laundry room, corridor, and garage constitute the major lighting fixtures.

c. Plumbing: The Rostone house at Century of Progress had no water and contained a storm sewer only. The house

now has complete plumbing with PVC pipes.

9. Architectural furniture: There are built-in bookshelves on either side of the living room fireplace. A linen closet with double hinged doors containing ten doorlights each is found to the right of the corridor leading to the eastern bedrooms. Both bedrooms have closets with built-in shelving. Built-in storage is found in the north bedroom above the closet.

D. Site

1. Historic landscape design:

The house was moved to 1.08 acres of land on Lake Front Drive in Beverly Shores from its original site at the 1933-34 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition along with four other houses from the Home and Industrial Arts Group on sites landscaped by the James W. Owen Nurseries. Before the move, Robert Bartlett expressed plans "to reconstruct and landscape them for sale exactly as they were on the Fair grounds."¹¹ According to a contemporary article, Bartlett appears to have specific landscaping in mind; "The homes will be reconstructed along Lake Front Drive in Beverly Shores in a permanent location, especially landscaped to suit each particular type of architecture."¹² Despite these claims, Bartlett neither replicated the exact fair siting nor did he appear to have created a landscaping scheme adapted to each house. By grouping the five houses together, however, he managed to recreate a sense of an "exhibition group" at Beverly Shores.

In some ways, the Beverly Shores group resembles the site at the Century of Progress Exposition. At the fair, both the Rostone and the Florida House were located on lakeside sites and were oriented toward the lake in the same way that they are today. The Rostone house had a straight walkway leading to its front door and a curved drive to its garage that resembles the arrangement at Beverly Shores. The Florida Tropical Home had a straight approach to its garage that is similar to the current driveway. At the fair and at Beverly Shores, the Rostone house was located to the left of the Florida Tropical Home. At the fair, however, the two were separated by the Lumber Industries and the Brick Manufacturing Association exhibits.

¹¹ "Six Model Homes Go to Market," Architectural Forum 62, no. 2 (February 1935): 181.

¹² "Modern Homes to Be Moved to Beverly Shores," newspaper article in Ann Carlson's scrapbook, Beverly Shores, Indiana.

2. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

Reproductions of floor plans in Dorothy Raley Home and Furnishings, 119.

Detail of wall and floor construction. In "Technical News and Research," Architectural Record (75), January 1934, 24.

Reproductions of floor plans, American Architect (143) July 1933, 26.

B. Early Views:

Boyce, "Walter Sholer, Rostone House, A Century of Progress," p. 38. Shows original rostone cladding, side entrance, and roof-deck stairs.

C. Interviews: none.

D. Bibliography:

~~BA~~Century of Progress Paradox: Whose meat and whose Poison?" Architectural Forum 61 (November 1934): 374-379.

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Reservation of Use Files. Park Headquarters, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Porter, IN.

"The Modern Houses of the Century of Progress Exposition," Architectural Forum. (July 1933): 51-64.

Walter, L. Rohe. "Look Homeward, America!" Review of Reviews and World's Work, October 1934, 27-30.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Reyerson/Burnham Libraries at the Art Institute of Chicago were closed summer 1994. Have vertical files on the fair and maybe on the Home and Industrial Arts Group.

F. Supplemental Material:

Map showing location of Home and Industrial Arts group on fair site. From 1934 Souvenir Map. Collection of David and Sharon Kemerer. Reservation of Use holders of Armco-Ferro House, Beverly Shores, IN.

Map showing layout of Home and Industrial Arts group. From "The Modern Houses of A Century of Progress," The Architectural Forum July 1933, 51.

Chart showing "scientific" research on girder span. From "New Materials and Building Methods" Architectural Record April 1932, 282.

Detail of wall and floor construction. In "Technical News and Research," Architectural Record (75), January 1934, 24.

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Reproductions of floor plans, American Architect (143) July 1933, 26.

Boyce, "Walter Sholer, Rostone House, A Century of Progress," p. 38. Shows original rostone cladding, side entrance, and roof-deck stairs.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Beverly Shores Century of Progress Homes and Historic District was undertaken in the summers of 1993 and 1994 by the Washington Office of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service, Robert J. Kapsch, HABS/HAER Division Chief, and Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS. The project was cosponsored by the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service, Andrew Ketterson, Chief of Cultural Resources and Craig Kenkel, Regional Historic Architect. Additional support was provided by Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Dale Engquest, Superintendent and William Supernaugh, Assistant Superintendent.

The project was directed by Frederick J. Lindstrom, HABS Supervisory Architect. The field documentation was completed by Project Supervisor, Judith E. Collins and Field Foremen: Joseph A. Boquiren and Laura J. Culberson, with Architecture Technicians: Bert V. Calhoun, II, Eric T. Helgoth, David M. Lefton, Michael J. Seibert, Lillian M. Smith and Lori A. Smith. The historical report and written building surveys were produced by Project Historian Maria F. Ali, under the direction of Catherine Lavoie, HABS Senior Historian and Sarah Allaback, HABS Historian. The large format photography was produced by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in 1994. Recognition must also go to the individual residents of the houses and the staff of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore for their cooperation and assistance.